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The great Duty of Charity recommended, particularly to all who profess Christianity.

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A
S E R M O N

Preached at

KENNINGTON-COMMON, *and at*
GLOUCESTER, &c.

B Y
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of Pembroke College, OXFORD.



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The Great Duty of Obedience recommended, &c.
A Sermon by the Rev. J. C. Whitbread, &c.

MEMORIAL

Presented at

Kennington-Common, and at
Gloucester, &c.



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of Pembroke College, Oxford.

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I COR. xiii. 8.

But Charity never faileth.

NOTHING is more valuable and commendable, and yet, not any one Duty is less practised, than that of Charity. We often pretend Concern and Pity for the Misery and Distress of our Fellow-Creatures, but yet we seldom commiserate their Condition so much as to relieve them, according to our own Abilities; but unless we assist them with what they may stand in Need of, for the Body, as well as for the Soul, all our Wishes are no more than Words of no Value, or Regard, and are not to be esteem'd or regarded: But when we hear of any deplorable Circumstance, into which our Fellow-Creatures are involv'd, be they Friends, or Enemies, it is our Duty, as Christians, to assist them to the utmost of our Power.

We are not, my Brethren, to hurt ourselves or our Families, for that is not that Charity which is so much recommended by St. *Paul*; No, but if we are any Ways capable of relieving them without hurting either ourselves,

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or

or Families, then it is our Duty to do it; and this never faileth where it proceeds from a right End, and with a right View.

St. *Paul* had been shewing, in the foregoing Chapter, that spiritual Gifts were divers; that God had disposed of one Blessing to one, and another to another: And tho' there was a Diversity of Blessings, yet, God did not bestow them to one Person; No, but God gave to one a Blessing which he deny'd to another, and gave a Blessing, or a Gift to the other which might make him as eminent in one Way, as the other's Gift made him so in another: But tho' there are these divers spiritual Gifts, they are all given for some wise End, and that is, to profit withal, and to that End they are thus diversly bestowed. We are not, on the one Hand, to hide those Gifts which God, my Brethren, has given us: Neither are we, on the other, to be so lavish of them, as to spend them upon our Lusts, or Pleasures, to satisfy our sensual Appetites, but they are to be used for the Glory of God, and the Good of immortal Souls: And after he has particularly illustrated this in the foregoing Chapter, he comes to this, wherein my Text is, and shews, that all Gifts, however great they may be in themselves, they are of no Value unless we have Charity, as you may
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see particularly, by considering from the Beginning of this Chapter.

But before I go any further I shall inform you what the Apostle means by Charity ; and that is, Love ; if there is true Love there will be Charity ; there will be an Endeavour to assist, help, and relieve according to that Ability wherewith God has blessed us : And, my Brethren, since this is so much recommended by the Apostle, let us see how valuable this Charity is, and how commendable in all those who pursue it.

And, therefore, my Brethren, I shall

I. Consider this Blessing as relating to the Bodies of Men.

II. I shall shew how much more valuable it is, when relating to the Souls of Men.

III. Shall shew you when your Charity is of the right Kind.

IV. Why this Charity, or the Grace of Love, never faileth.

V. Shall conclude all, with an Exhortation to all of you, High, and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, to be found in the constant Practice of this valuable and commendable Duty.

And, *First*, I am to consider this Duty, as relating to the Bodies of Men.

And, *First*, Consider, my Brethren, how Praise-worthy this Duty is in helping our Fellow-Creatures ; for we were created to be a Help to each other ; God has made no one independent not to need the Assistance of another ; the richest and most powerful Man upon the Face of this Earth, needs the Help and Assistance of those which are around him ; and tho' he may be so great To-day, a thousand Accidents may make him as low To-morrow ; and he that is so rolling in Plenty To-day, may be in as much Scarcity To-morrow. And if our rich Men would be more charitable to their poor Friends and Neighbours, it would be a Means of recommending them to the Favour of others, if Providence should frown upon them : But alas, my Brethren, our great Men had much rather spend their Money in a Playhouse, at a Ball, an Assembly, or a Masquerade, than relieve a poor distressed Servant of Jesus Christ. They had rather spend their Estates on their Hawks and Hounds, on their Whores, and their earthly, sensual, devilish Pleasures, than comfort, nourish, or relieve one of their distressed Fellow-Creatures. What Difference is there between the King, on the Throne,
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and the Beggar on the Dunghill ; when God demands their Breaths, there is no Difference my Brethren, in the Grave, nor there will be none at the Day of Judgment. You will not be excused because you have had a great Estate, a fine House, and lived in all the Pleasures that Earth could afford you ; No, my Brethren, these Things will be a Means of your Condemnation, neither will you be judged according to the Largeness of your Estate, but according to the Use you have made of it.

Now you may think nothing but of your Pleasures and Delights, of living in Ease and Plenty, and never consider how many Thousands of your Fellow-Creatures would rejoice at what you are making Waste of, and setting no Account by : Let me beseech you, my rich Brethren, to consider the Poor of the World, and how commendable and praiseworthy it is to relieve those who are distressed. Consider how pleasing this is to God, how delightful it is to Man, and how many Prayers you will have put up for your Welfare, by those Persons whom you relieve ; and let this be a Consideration to spare a little out of the Abundance, wherewith God has blessed you, for the Relief of his Poor ; he could, my Brethren, have placed you in their low Condition, and they in your high State ; it

is only owing to his good Pleasure that has thus made the Difference, and shall not this, my dear Brethren, make you remember your distressed Fellow-Creatures ?

Let me beseech you to consider, which will stand you best at the Day of Judgment, so much Money expended at a Horse-race, at a Cockpit, at a Play or Masquerade, or so much given for the Relief of my Fellow-Creatures ; so much given for the distressed Members of Jesus Christ.

I beseech you, my dear Brethren, that you would consider how valuable and commendable, as I said before, this Duty is : Do not, my Brethren, be angry at my thus exhorting you to that Duty, which is so much recommended by Jesus Christ himself, and by all his Apostles : I speak particularly to you, my rich Brethren, to intreat of you to consider those that are poor in this World, and help them from Time to Time, as their Necessity calls for it. Consider that there is a Curse denounced against the Riches of those who do not thus do Good with them ; Namely,

Go now you rich Men, weep and howl for your Miseries that shall come upon you ; your Riches are corrupted, your Garments are Moth-eaten, your Gold and Silver is cankered, and the Rust of them shall be a Witness against you, and shall eat your Flesh, as it were Fire ;

Fire; ye have heaped your Treasure together for the last Day. Thus you see, my Brethren, the dreadful Woe pronounced against all those who hoard up the Abundance of the Things of this Life, without relieving the Distresses and Necessities of those who are in want thereof: And then the Apostle goes on in speaking against those who have got their Estates by Fraud, as too many have, my Brethren, in these Days. *Behold the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is by you kept back by Fraud, crieth; and the Cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the Ears of the Lord God of Sabbath.* Ye have lived in Pleasure on the Earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your Hearts, as in a Day of Slaughter. And thus, my Brethren, if you go on to live after the Lust of the Flesh, are pampering your own Bellies, and making them a God, while the Poor all round you are starving, God will make these Things a Witness against you, which shall be as Fire for your Souls, and gnaw your Consciences to all Eternity; therefore, let me once more recommend this Charity unto the Bodies of Men, and beseech you to remember what the blessed Lord Jesus Christ has promised unto those who thus love his Members, that as they have done it

to the least of his Members, they have done it unto him.

I am not now speaking for myself, I am not, my Brethren, recommending my little Flock in *Georgia* to you, then you might say, as many do, that I wanted the Money for myself; no, my Brethren, I am now recommending the Poor of this Land to you, your poor Neighbours, poor Friends, yea, your poor Enemies, unto you, they are what I am now speaking for; and when I see so many starving in the Streets almost naked, my Bowels are moved with Pity and Concern, to consider that many, in whose Power it is, to lend their assisting Hand, should only shut up their Bowels of Compassion, and will not relieve their Fellow-Creatures, tho' in the most deplorable Condition, for the Want thereof.

As I have, my Brethren, thus recommended this particularly to the Rich among you, so now I would, *Secondly*, recommend this to another Set of People among us, who, instead of being the most forward in Acts of Charity, commonly are the most backward: I mean the Clergy of this Land.

Good God! how amazing is the Consideration, that those, whom God has called out to labour in spiritual Things, should be so backward in this Duty, as fatal Experience teach-

teacheth, our Clergy (that is the Generality thereof) are only seeking after Preferment, running up and down to obtain one Benefice upon the Neck of another; and to keep up an Estate, either to spend upon the Pleasures of Life, or to gratify their sensual Appetites, while the Poor of their Flock is forgotten; nay, they are worse, they are scorned, hated and disdained.

I am not now, my Brethren, speaking of all the Clergy; no, my Brethren, blessed be God, there are some among them, who abhor such Proceedings, and are willing to relieve the Neccessitous among them; but God knows, these are but very few, the Generality, as I said before, do take no Thought of the Poor among them.

They can visit the Rich and the Great, but the Poor they cannot bear in their Sight; they are forgetful, wilfully forgetful of the poor Members of Jesus Christ.

They have gone out of the old Paths, and got into a new polite Way, my Brethren, which is not to be found warranted in the Word of God: No, they are sunk into a fine Way of acting, but as fine as it is, it was not the Practice of the Apostles, or of the Christians in any Age of the Church: They visited and relieved the Poor among them; but how rare, my Brethren, is this
among

among us, how seldom do we find Charity in a Clergyman?

It is with Grief I speak these Things, but a woeful Experience is a Witness to the Truth thereof: And if all the Clergy of this Land was here, I would tell them boldly, that they did not keep up in the Ways of Charity, but that they were remiss in their Duty; and in Stead of selling all and giving to the Poor, they will not sell any thing, nor give to the Poor neither.

Thridly, I would once more recommend this to you who are Poor, to be charitable to one another.

Tho' you may not have, my Brethren, Money, or the Things of this Life, to bestow upon one another; yet, you may assist them by comforting and advising them not to be discouraged tho' they are low in the World; or in Sicknes you may help them according as you have Time, or Ability: Do not, my dear Brethren, be unkind to one another: Do not grieve, or vex, or be angry with each other, for this is giving the World an Advantage over you.

And if God, my Brethren, stirs up any to relieve you, do not make an ill use of what God, in his Providence, has, by the Hands of some Christian, bestowed upon you: Be

always

ways humble and wait on God; do not murmur, or repine if you see any whom is relieved and you not; still wait on the Lord, and help one another, according to your Abilities, from Time to Time.

And thus, my Brethren, I have shew'd you how valuable this is to the Bodies of Men. I now proceed

Secondly, To shew you how much more valuable this Charity is, when it extends to the Souls of Men.

And here, *First*, shall shew you, that the Soul is more valuable than the Body.

It would be of no Advantage, but an infinite Disadvantage to obtain all the World if we was to lose our Souls. The Soul, my dear Brethren, is of infinite Value, and of infinite Concern, and, therefore, we should extend our Charity whenever we see it needful, and, likewise, should reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all Godliness and Love.

We should indeed, my dear Brethren, use all Means and Opportunities for the Salvation of our own Souls, and of the Souls of others. We may have a great deal of Charity and Concern for the Bodies of our Fellow-Creatures, when we have no Thought, or Concern for their immortal Souls: And oh, how sad is that, my Brethren, to have thought for a mortal,

tal, but not for the immortal Part; to have Charity for the Body of our Fellow-Creatures while we have no Concern for their immortal Souls: But it may be, we can help them to ruin them, but have no Concern in the saving of them.

You may, my Brethren, love to spend merry Evening with them, to go to a Play or a Horse-race with them; but on the other Hand, you cannot bear the Thoughts of going to a Sermon, to a Society with them; No you would sing the Songs of the Drunkards but you will not sing Hymns with them; No this is not polite enough, this is unbecoming of a Gentleman of Taste, this is unfashionable, and is only practiced among a Parcel of Enthusiasts and Madmen.

Thus, my Brethren, you will be so uncharitable as to join Hand and Hand with those who are hastening to their own Damnation while you will not be so charitable as to assist them in being brought from Darkness to Light from the Power of Satan unto God. This, my dear Brethren, is the greatest Charity as can be to save a Soul from Death: This of far greater Advantage than relieving the Body of a Fellow-Creature; for the most miserable Object as could be, Death would deliver from it all. But, my dear Brethren, Death to those who are not born again, would be

far from being a Release from all Misery, that
 would be an Inlet to all Torment, and that
 to all Eternity: Therefore, we should assist, as
 much as possible, to keep a Soul from falling
 into the Hands and Clutches of Satan; for he
 is the grand Enemy of Souls: And how should
 this excite you to watch over your own and
 other Souls? for unless you are earnest with
 God Satan will be too hard for you; and,
 therefore, it is the greatest Charity to watch
 over one another's Words and Actions, that
 we may forewarn one another when Danger is
 nigh, or when the Enemy of Souls approaches.
 And if you have once known, my Bre-
 thren, the Value of your own Souls, and
 know what it is to be snatched, as Brands out
 of the burning Fire, you will be solicitous that
 others may be brought out of the same State.
 It is not leading of a moral Life, being honest,
 and paying every Man his just Due, it is not
 this that is a Proof of your being in a State of
 Grace, of your being born again, and of being
 renewed in the Spirit of your Minds; No,
 my Brethren, you may die honest, just, cha-
 ritable, and yet not be in a State of Salva-
 tion.

It is not the preaching of the Morality,
 which most of our Pulpits now bring forth,
 that is sufficient to bring you from Sin unto
 God. I saw you willing to learn and yet
 were

were ignorant of the Necessity of being born again, of being regenerated, of having all old Things done away, and all Things becoming new in your Souls. I could not bear my Brethren, to see you in the Highway to Destruction, and none to bring you back. It was Love to your Souls, it was a Desire to see Christ formed in you, which brought me into the Fields, the Highways, and Hedges to preach Jesus, a Crucified Jesus unto you, who dying for you, as having gave himself for you. It was Charity, indeed it was Charity to your Souls which has exposed me to the ill Treatment of my Letter-learned Brethren.

Therefore, my dear Brethren, let me advise you to be charitable to the Souls of one another; that is, by advising with all Love and Tenderneſs, to follow after Christ and the Things which belong to their immortal Peace, before they be forever hid from their Eyes.

I now proceed, in the *Third* Place, to shew when your Charity is of the right Kind.

And here, my Brethren, I shall shew, *First*, when it is not, and, *Secondly*, when it is of the right Kind.

First, Your Charity is not of the right Kind, when it proceeds, my Brethren, from worldly Views, or Ends.

If it is to be seen of Men, to receive any Advantage from them, to be esteemed into Favour, or to gain a Reputation in the World; if you have any Pride in it, or expect to reap Benefit from God meerly for it: If all or each of these is the End of your Charity, then it is all in vain; your Charity does not proceed from a right End; you are hereby deceiving your own Souls. If you give an Alms purely to be observed by Man, or expecting Favour from God, meerly on the Account thereof, then you have not the Glory of God, or the Benefit of your Fellow-Creatures Good at Heart, but meerly yourself, to gratify a sensual Appetite, or to obtain some Favour, or Advantage from Man; this, this is not Charity. Nor,

Secondly, Is that true Charity when we give any Thing to our Fellow-Creatures purely to indulge them in Vice; this is so far from being Charity, that it is a Sin, both against God, and against our Fellow-Creatures: And yet, my Brethren, this is as common, as it is sinful, to carry our distressed Friends, under a specious Pretence of Charity, to this or the other Entertainment, with no other View, but to make them guilty of Excess: Hereby, my Brethren, we are guilty of a double Sin: We are not to sin ourselves, and much less should we endeavour to make another sin likewise. But,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Our Charity comes from a right End, when it proceeds from Love to God, and the Welfare both of Body and Soul of our Fellow-Creatures.

When this, my Brethren, is our sole End of relieving our distressed Fellow-Creatures, then our Charity comes from a right End, and we may only expect to reap Advantage by it; this is the Charity which is pleasing to God, and that he coveteth. When we do it purely in Love to God, when his Glory is thy Aim, then it is, that God is well pleased, when all our Actions proceed from Love, Love to God, Love to Souls, to the Welfare of immortal Souls.

Consider, my dear Brethren, that it was Love for Souls that brought the blessed Jesus down from the Bosom of his Father; that made him, who was equal with him, come and take upon him our Nature; that caused the Lord of Life to die the cruel, painful, ignominious and accursed Death, even that of the Cross: It was Love to Souls, to immortal Souls, that brought this blessed Jesus among us: And O that we might consider how great the Value of Souls was, and is: It was that which made Jesus to bleed, pant and die the accursed Death of the Cross: And surely Souls must be of infinite Worth, which made an infinite God to die so shameful a Death.

And shall not this, my dear Brethren, make you have a true Value for Souls? This, this, is of the greatest Worth; this, this, is the greatest Charity, when it comes from the Love to God, and from the Love to Souls: This will be a Charity, the Satisfaction of which will last to all Eternity: And O that this may make you have so much Regard for the Value of Souls, as not to neglect all Opportunities for the doing of them Good: Here is something worth having Charity for, because they remain to all Eternity: And, therefore, let me earnestly beseech you to consider the Worth of immortal Souls; let your Charity extend to them, that by your Advice and Admonition, my Brethren, you may be an Instrument, in the Hands of God, in bringing Souls to the Lord Jesus.

I am in the next Place to consider,

Fourthly, Why this Charity, my Brethren, or this Grace of Love never faileth.

And it never faileth in respect of its proceeding from an unchangeable God. We are not to understand here, that our Charity is always the same; No, there may, and frequently is, Ebbs and Flows; but still, my dear Brethren, it never totally faileth; No, the Grace of Love remaineth forever: There is, and will be, a Charity to all who have erred

and run astray from God. We can not be easy to see Souls in the high Way to Destruction and not use our utmost Endeavour to bring them back^d from Sin, and shew them the dreadful Consequence of running into Evil; they cannot bear to see those Souls, for whom Christ died, perish for want of Knowledge; and if they see, my Brethren, any of the Bodies of their Fellow-Creatures, they then are doing the utmost of their Power to relieve them.

Thus Charity will never fail, among those who have a true Love to the Lord Jesus and know the Value of Souls; they will be charitable to those who are in Distress: And thus you see that true Charity, if it proceeds from a right End, never faileth.

I now proceed, my Brethren, in the last Place, to exhort all of you, High, and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, to practice this valuable and commendable Duty of Charity.

I beseech you, my dear Brethren, to practice this Duty of Charity. It is not your rolling in your Coaches, taking your Pleasure and not considering the Miseries of your Fellow - Creatures, that is commendable or Praise-worthy; but your relieving your distressed poor Fellow - Creatures is valuable and Praise-worthy wherever it is found. But

very few of our gay and polite Gentlemen consider their poor Friends; No, they despise them, they do not regard them: They can indulge themselves in the Follies of Life, and had much rather spend their Estates in Lusts and Pleasures, while the Poor all round them are not thought of, nor are worthy to be set with the Dogs of their Flock. And, therefore, if you have an Abundance of the Things of this World, then you are esteemed as Companions for the polite and gay Company of Life: But if you are poor, then you must not expect to find any Favour; then you are hated and not thought fit for Company, or Conversation. If you have an Abundance of the Things of this Life, and do not want any Assistance, then you have many ready to help you: But, my dear Brethren, I do not doubt but your own Experience is a Proof of my Assertions, that if you come into Distress then those, who promised to give you Relief, have quite forgot what they promised, and despise you because Providence has frowned upon you: But, my dear Brethren, this is not acting like those who are bound for the heavenly *Jerusalem*; but our Hearts and our Actions are giving our Lips the Lie; for if we profess the Name of Christ, and do not depart from all Iniquity,

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they are not those who are worthy of being esteemed Christians indeed.

For if we have not Charity, we are not Christians; Charity is the great Duty of Christians; and where is our Christianity, my Brethren, if we want Charity? this is truly commendable, this is truly justifiable; and, therefore, my dear Brethren, let me beseech you to exercise Charity to your distressed Fellow-Creatures: Indeed, my dear Brethren, this is truly commendable, truly valuable, and, therefore, my dear Brethren, let me beseech you, as in the Bowels of Mercy, of tender Mercy to Christ, to consider his poor distressed Members; and, therefore, exercise, exercise, I beseech you, this Charity to your distressed Members; for if you have no Regard unto Charity; if you have no Compassion, no Value for the Bodies of Men, you are not, indeed, my dear Brethren, Christians, nor true Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, unless you remember his poor distressed Members: Therefore, I humbly beg you to consider those who want Relief, who are really destitute, to relieve them according to your Abilities; and, therefore, my dear Brethren, let me beg you to consider your distressed Fellow-Creatures; and do, my Brethren, consider, that the more favourable Providence has been to you, it should make you the more earnest and solicitous to
relieve

relieve those whom you may find in Distress; it is of the utmost Consequence, and what is well pleasing to your Fellow-Creatures, and doing your Duty to God. When you are called from hence, then all your Riches and Grandeur will be over; the Grave will make no Distinction; your great Estate will be of no Signification in the other World; and if you have made a bad Use of the Talent which God hath put into your Hands, it will be only an Aggravation of your Condemnation at the great Day of Account, when God shall come to demand your Souls, and to call you to an Account for the Use you have put the Abundance of the Things of this Life to.

And now to conclude, let me once more, my Brethren, beseech each of you to act according to the Circumstances of Life, which God, in his rich and free Mercy, has given you.

If you, my dear Brethren, were sensible of the great Consequence which would attend your acting in this charitable Manner, it would be a Proof of your Love to God, because you love his Members, and, therefore be not so uncharitable in your Tempers, as not to relieve any of your distressed Fellow-Creatures.

Consider, my dear Brethren, how easy it is for many of you, by putting your Mites together, to help one who is in Distress; and
how

how can you tell but that little you give may be a Means of bringing one from Distress into flourishing Circumstances; and then if there is a true Spirit of a Christian in them they can never be sufficiently thankful to God, the Author, and you as the Instrument in being so great a Friend to them in their melancholy and distressed Circumstances; therefore, consider once more how much better your Account will be at the Day of Judgment, what Peace of Conscience you will enjoy: How satisfactory must be the Thought of having relieved the Widow and the Fatherless: This is recommended by the Lord Jesus Christ, and has been practiced in all Ages of the Church; and therefore, my Brethren, be found in the Practice of this Duty.

I have been the larger upon this, as to the Bodies of Men, because, my dear Brethren, our Enemies say we deny all moral Actions; but, blessed be God, they speak against us without Cause: Now, my dear Brethren, we highly value them; but we say, that Faith in Christ, Love of God, being born again are of infinite more worth; then you cannot be true Christians without having Charity to your Fellow-Creatures, be they Friends or Enemies, if they are in Distress; and, therefore, be found in the Practice of this Duty.

is commanded by the blessed Jesus, and then,
if it is true Charity, you shall live and reign
with him forever.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and
God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Power,
Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion,
both now, and forevermore. Amen.*



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